

Reducing Bias in HR



“Bias” refers to the tendency to favor or discriminate against a particular group or individual based on unconscious or conscious assumptions, stereotypes, or prejudices.

In the context of HR, bias can be present in many practices across the employee lifecycle, from attraction to performance evaluation and promotion decisions. It can result in a less diverse and inclusive workplace with high levels of disengagement.

By understanding and addressing bias in HR practices, organizations can promote fairness and equality, attract and retain a diverse workforce, and create a more inclusive and innovative workplace culture that leads to better productivity and performance.

This playbook will help you become aware of potential bias in your HR function, providing an overview of some areas to be aware of across each stage of the employee lifecycle, along with practical tips on where to get started.

Please note that this playbook is not an extensive list but rather a starting point to work toward a more inclusive HR function.

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1. Attraction | Employer brand



Example: *Your external employer brand messaging only speaks to a certain demographic group and excludes others.*

AREAS TO BE AWARE OF

- Brand visibility across different talent pool demographics and sectors through social media monitoring, events, and sponsorships:
 - ✓ Identify patterns of bias and adjust your messaging accordingly.
 - ✓ Use diverse imagery and avoid any language or practices that may discourage candidates from diverse backgrounds from applying.
 - ✓ Collaborate with organizations that support diverse talent pools and sectors.

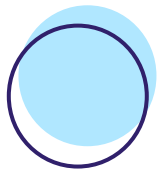
POSSIBLE DATA SOURCES TO DETECT BIAS

- Social media engagement metrics
- Social media brand visibility numbers
- Event attendance data
- Hiring metrics
- Inclusive language audit



Tip

You can use tools like **Hootsuite**, **Sprout Social**, or **Buffer** to track engagement metrics like comments, likes, and shares and analyze the demographics of your audience on social media channels.



1. Attraction | Recruitment and selection



Example: *You screen out candidates based on preconceived ideas unrelated to the key requirements of the job.*

AREAS TO BE AWARE OF

- Applicant mix across roles and levels in terms of key demographics
 - ✓ Set diversity goals.
 - ✓ Use diverse recruitment channels.
 - ✓ Review recruitment practices.
- Inclusive language on job ads
 - ✓ Use plain language and avoid discriminatory language.
- Recruitment channels utilized and how this includes/excludes individuals
 - ✓ Evaluate the effectiveness of different recruitment channels in reaching a diverse range of candidates.
 - ✓ Build partnerships with organizations that serve diverse communities to reach a wider range of candidates.

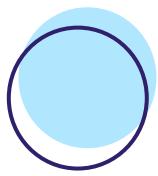
POSSIBLE DATA SOURCES TO DETECT BIAS

- Data from applicant tracking systems
- Feedback from applicants that were not hired
- Shortlisting profile numbers
- Inclusive language audit
- Channel representation across audio, visual, and digital mediums
- Compliance data (ensuring requirements related to diversity and inclusion in recruitment and selection)



Tip

You can use tools like **Textio**, **Gender Decoder**, **Joblint**, or **guides to avoiding ableist language** to ensure plain, nondiscriminatory language in your job ads.



1. Attraction | Interviewing



Example: *Your panel members score candidates on criteria irrelevant to the job and which automatically discriminates against candidates from a specific group, experience, or background.*

AREAS TO BE AWARE OF

- Standardize the interview process for all candidates, including the questions asked, the evaluation criteria, and the scoring system.
- Provide training to interviewers to help them recognize and mitigate unconscious biases.
- Avoid irrelevant questions.
- Use diverse interview panels.
- Review interview results.

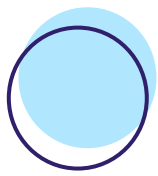
POSSIBLE DATA SOURCES TO DETECT BIAS

- Analysis of interviewing scores per panel members over time
- Candidate feedback survey or interviews
- Panel-evaluation feedback
- Interview process data



Tip

This [interview scoring sheet](#) can help you standardize your interviews by providing you with customizable example questions and automatically generated scores that will help you to objectively evaluate the performance of your candidates and make informed hiring decisions.



1. Attraction | Assessments



Example: *You use an assessment battery that has not been validated for use across different cultures and automatically disadvantages some candidates.*

AREAS TO BE AWARE OF

- Utilize culturally validated assessments.
- Consider assessment recommendations in relation to different groups.
- Eliminate irrelevant assessment items.
- Evaluate based on job-related criteria.
- Use multiple assessors from different departments and with different backgrounds.
- Review assessment results.

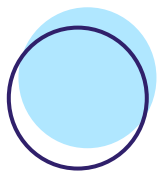
POSSIBLE DATA SOURCES TO DETECT BIAS

- Review the assessment results to identify any patterns of bias or disparities in scores between different demographic groups.
- Solicit feedback from candidates about their experience with the assessment process, including any concerns or feedback related to bias or fairness.
- Monitor assessment quality metrics such as reliability and validity.
- Collect feedback from assessors, including any concerns or feedback related to bias or fairness in the assessment process.
- Collect and analyze demographic data on candidates and assessors to identify any patterns or disparities in the assessment process.
- Compare the assessment results to external data sources, such as industry benchmarks or other organizations' assessment results, to identify any potential disparities or biases in the assessment process.



Tip

When selecting an assessment provider, request them to demonstrate that the assessment has been validated cross-culturally to ensure they are fair, unbiased, and reliable across diverse candidate groups.



2. Engagement



Example: *You evaluate your promotion data for the past year and realize that one specific employee group is overrepresented while others do not have access to the same opportunities.*

AREAS TO BE AWARE OF

- Monitor representation of groups at different levels and across workforce profiles.
- Ensure equal engagement levels for all groups, regardless of their demographic background.
- Voice of the employee: Ensure all employees have equal opportunity to raise concerns and provide feedback, regardless of their demographic background.
- Monitor the tenure of different demographic groups within the organization and compare it to market benchmarks to improve retention and career development opportunities.
- Track the number and types of employee relations cases by demographic group and compare the distribution to the overall workforce demographics.

POSSIBLE DATA SOURCES TO DETECT BIAS

- Employee engagement survey data
- Turnover rates
- Diversity in leadership
- Voice-of-the-employee feedback
- Employment relations data
- Exit and stay interviews



Tip

When conducting engagement surveys, always use the demographics filter to test for bias against specific groups.

3. Performance and Reward



Example: *Specific employee groups are rated higher than others as part of the performance feedback process without valid reasons.*

AREAS TO BE AWARE OF

- Ensure fair performance distribution and rating across different groups.
- Define equal pay levels across different groups in relation to job grades and role criteria.
- Review benefit distribution across various employee groups.
- Ensure equal recognition across different employee groups.

POSSIBLE DATA SOURCES TO DETECT BIAS

- Performance appraisal scores
- Promotion rate
- Pay equity
- Benefit distribution and realization rates
- Consistency of recognition practices

Tip

Make sure to monitor performance distribution and rating across different employee groups.

4. Development and Succession



Example: *Your development channels automatically exclude some parts of your workforce, or development opportunities are only available to specific groups while excluding others for no reason.*

AREAS TO BE AWARE OF

- Ensure availability, accessibility, and effectiveness of development opportunities.
- Review monetary spend on development across different groups.
- Compose your training profile on an annual basis (number of employees trained across different groups).

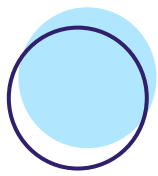
POSSIBLE DATA SOURCES TO DETECT BIAS

- HRIS
- Employee surveys
- Learning analytics from LMS
- Performance management systems
- Employee stay interviews
- Training spend analysis



Tip

Review your current succession pipelines and audit whether there is any bias present in how successors were identified, allocated, and gained access to development opportunities. Report on demographical factors to make potential bias visible.



5. Exit



Example: *You notice that turnover seems to be higher in some groups compared to others.*

AREAS TO BE AWARE OF

- Conduct exit interviews to gather feedback on bias and discrimination.
- Analyze exit data for the distribution of departures across different groups.
- Ensure termination reasons are clear, job related, and nondiscriminatory.
- Monitor distribution of severance pay, benefits, and outplacement services.
- Consider stay interviews to identify retention strategies.
- Develop an effective offboarding process to mitigate negative impact.

POSSIBLE DATA SOURCES TO DETECT BIAS

- Exit interview data
- Exit surveys
- Employer branding metrics



Tip

You can download this [employee offboarding playbook](#), which will help you offer departing employees a seamless offboarding experience.

This [exit interview template](#) will help you gather valuable insights from leaving employees.

You can record and monitor key insights over time in this [tracking sheet](#).